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## POOR JACK.

In a great nation such as ours, essentially maritime, it is astounding how few there are who have any acquaintance with the manners and customs of the sailors of our mercantile marine. Our ships on every sea, some perchance steaming onwards with the distressing glare of a scorching tropical sun at noontide falling vertically on the devoted heads of their crews, their stokers fainting by reason of the intense heat and utter stagnation of the atmosphere; others, their canvas straining and timbers creaking in fierce conflict with the ice-cold blasts of the gales of the polar seas; or throughout the long dreary nights and short days of dense fog, all hands with every sense alert, in dread anticipation lest at any moment some massive iceberg should drift across their path, carrying destruction upon them.

These pioneers of civilisation, not unworthy descendants of the hardy Norsemen who first turned in furrows the waters of the German Ocean with their rude keels, are as much strangers to the dwellers in our country towns and hamlets as the inhabitants of the interior of Africa or Swift's Lilliputians. The novelist represents them as men full to the brim with nautical phrases, given to hitching up their trousers and pulling their forelocks; men incapable of talking on any theme like a rational being, their jaws always revolving some choice piece of hard tobacco, in order to extract its dark juice, which they expectorate wherever they may be. The painter holds forth Jack to the world with his nether limbs encased in garments evolved from the painter's inner consciousness; while, on the other hand, his manly breast is exposed to all the winds that blow. In both cases he is totally misrepresented. This may be due to the fact that the sailor of the royal navy is always seen in his uniform. His jaunty hat with streamers flying in the wind, his painfully clean knife lanyard, his peculiarly shaped unmentionables,

his rolling gait, and bronzed countenance, all conspire to impress the mind of the average landsman with the feeling that this is the real Simon Pure. He has all the outward and visible signs of a toiler of the deep, without which, as the advertisements have it, none are genuine. Would that the sailors of our vast merchant navy could assimilate in these respects with their more fortunate brethren of the sister service. Nothing, however, can be more dissimilar than the dress and deportment of the two classes. They are as far apart as the poles of the universe.

To the man-of-war's man is assigned the guardianship of our commerce. He is supported by the money of the nation; his officers are gentlemen, who vie with each other in their zealous efforts to keep him presentable and of good morals. He is rarely overburdened with work, and that which he has is of a very light character. His food is well cooked by trained men, and scrupulously clean. He is not compelled to draw rations which he does not care to eat. The value of these rations is placed to his account at a specified price, thus enabling him to supply himself with more pleasing fare when in port. During the greater part of his life he is swinging to moorings in some snug harbour, taking at times a pleasure-trip to sea just for the benefit of his health and 'to keep his hand in.' If ill, he has good medical advice ready to hand. On returning home, he is granted leave of absence to display himself to his admiring townsfolk. When age creeps upon him, he is pensioned off with something to live upon; while at his death, if he should wish it, he is granted a funeral with naval honours. This is the *beau idéal* of a sailor's life. To a youth wishing to adopt a seafaring life, we unhesitatingly say that the royal navy is to be preferred to the merchant service.

Now, let us turn to the latter picture—the very seamiest life one could follow. And yet, without 'Poor Jack,' commerce would be at a stand-still. Of what use would be the products

of our looms and factories, of what avail our industries of coal and iron, if we had no hardy mariners to carry our textile fabrics, our coal, and our iron, across the stormy ocean, bringing back more rare and more valuable necessities, together with the luxuries which render the lowly cottage home of the present day equal in point of comfort to the ancient baronial hall?

Cromwell, when he framed the Navigation Laws, struck at the root of Holland's supremacy as a carrier on the high seas. Great Britain at once assumed the sceptre, which she has wielded ever since. The Lord Protector, with great wisdom foresaw that the British nation had been ordained by her insular position to carry commerce into the most remote parts of the earth. Unless she were mistress of the seas, the occupation of her people would be limited to the tillage of the soil. We should be compelled to depend on the precarious results of toilsome agriculture. Our sailors have carried our religion and our advanced civilisation at the same time as our articles of merchandise. They have brought back with them the arts and sciences peculiar to other nations. They have been, although perhaps unwittingly, prime factors in doing good to our own people and to all mankind. They conduct our overflowing population in safety to new and more inviting shores, to found cities and states, which shall hereafter make their voices heard with no uncertain sound in the great councils of the world. Notwithstanding all this, the merchant sailor is scarcely known outside of his own circle. He has helped to swell the banking account of many a shipowner, yet but scant justice has been meted out to him. He is, as a class, deteriorating both physically and morally, and it is fairly within the limits of probability that the genuine merchant sailor will, unless some alteration takes place, soon be almost as rare as the mastodon.

Why is this? We cannot believe that there is anything of necessity demoralising in the life of a seafarer. The ocean with its ever changing aspect; the wondrous phenomena of the atmosphere; the gorgeous sunsets and azure vault of the heavens above him, studded with myriads of effulgent stars, afford him subjects for elevated feeling. Nor can it be affirmed that life on the ocean is prejudicial to health; nowhere is there such an unlimited supply of fresh air and ozone. It is, however, a lamentable but indisputable fact that our merchant sailors are sadly altering for the worse. We have shown that this cannot be attributed to any evils inherent in the life itself; it must therefore be due to remediable external influences, over which Poor Jack may or may not have control. He is sliding down a steep social plane, attaining a greater velocity as he descends. His naval confrere, however, has moved onwards both in personal comforts and moral qualities in one unbroken march of improvement.

What are the causes acting so injuriously to the merchant seaman? Can any feasible remedies be proposed? These are the questions which force themselves upon our attention, and call for our careful consideration. In our opinion, the sailor of himself can do but little to arrest his downward progress. Circumstances are too

strong for him. It would appear that it is to the shipowners to whom we must look to arrest the degeneracy of the British seaman. The principal causes of his deterioration are the introduction of steamships; the abolition of compulsory apprenticeship; want of kindred feeling between the shipowner and his employees; the almost complete absence of any home influence whatever while on shore; drunken habits; and last, but not least, the bad accommodation on board ship.

The introduction of steam as a motive-power on the deep sea effected a complete revolution in the condition of the merchant seaman. The old collier craft of the North Sea were swept away. These vessels constituted a splendid nursery of seamen, merchant and naval. They were family ships, wherein the sailors had an interest in their welfare. Now, a single steamship is owned by many people. It may so happen that the mild rector in some out-of-the-way country parsonage is indirectly, in his capacity of shareholder in some single ship Company, the cause of great suffering to his fellow-man at sea. Sailors cannot be trained in steamships, which in most instances have only rudimentary masts. The stately tea-clipper with her lofty spars, graceful lines, and immense spread of canvas, has disappeared. It would break the heart of the old-time clipper-sailor if he were to see these straight-stemmed, ungraceful steamers which have taken over the tea-trade. Even the route is changed since his day; although it is possible, if the trying quarantine regulations recommended by the Sanitary Congress be adopted, it would pay the shipowner better to adopt the old Cape route, in preference to that of the Suez Canal. Our ships are too valuable to be needlessly delayed at the behest of any foreign power. Everything is now made of iron or steel, and, as far as possible, worked by steam. This is the iron age in reality. The iron has entered into the seaman's soul. Stokers have been brought in who were drawn from a lower class than that from which sailors came; these rough, uncouth men have reacted on the sailor with whom they mess. Moreover, in steamers it is sufficient if the man before the mast know how to steer; this can be easily acquired, and his other duties call for no more skill; he is simply a hewer of wood and drawer of water. Hence sailors of the old type are becoming few and far between.

It was formerly compulsory on all owners to carry a certain number of youths as apprentices to the nautical profession; but shipowners petitioned against this, and compulsory apprenticeship was abolished. An apprentice would usually be of the lower-middle class. His parents had to pay a premium with him, and he was bound to serve an apprenticeship of seven years; at the end of which time he was, as a rule, eligible for a junior officer's post, when occasion offered. Now, but few ships carry apprentices; while in steamers it is out of the question. It is true that we have reformatory and other training-ships for boys partly to supply the deficit. But, we ask, why should the mercantile marine be deemed just the place to send refuse gathered from the criminal classes? The falling-off in apprentices also led to the introduction

of foreigners in great numbers, till, at the present date, probably more than half the crews of ships flying the British flag are aliens. We remember three large ships lost a little while ago the crews of which were almost without exception Scandinavians. In two ships well known to us, one hailing from Liverpool, the other from London, not a man on board of either was a subject of Her Britannic Majesty. These foreigners are mostly Scandinavians and Russians. They are excellent seamen, but certainly not the elite of their race. In many cases they are deserters from their own country's ships. They are untidy in their habits, too often addicted to drunkenness, and far inferior in morality to the apprentices whom they have supplanted. Their redeeming virtue in the eyes of the shipowner is their excessive quietness.

In the present state of shipowning, the employers and employed are rarely brought into personal contact. The men are treated as inferior kinds of machines, to be used when requisite, but not of sufficient value to retain when the exigency is satisfied. In many cases, when the ship gets in, Jack is sent about his business. If Poor Jack should require money in a foreign port, or even in British India, the rate of exchange is sure to tell against him. He is not allowed to draw much. The captain, however, kindly agrees with a so-called bumboat man, or purveyor of small stores, to pay for whatever his crew may buy. Now, money is what Jack wishes for. The trader will advance him one rupee if he is allowed to call it two; thus Jack receives, say, five rupees, and becomes a debtor to the trader for ten.

When Jack gets home, his troubles assume another form. In this respect he is, however, thanks to the Board of Trade, far better off than formerly. We cannot bestow too much praise on that department for their paternal care of him in the face of vested interests. The sailor can now, if he chooses, proceed to his home at once. The Board of Trade has proper officials who attend to his accounts, and, by means of the post-office, remit his money to him. There are many sailors who have no relatives; they either lodge at the Sailors' Home or at private boarding-houses. With respect to Sailors' Homes, though infinitely better than boarding-houses, they are capable of great improvement. The influence of home is conspicuous by its absence.

A great deal of the drunkenness of sailors appears to be caused by the enforced abstinence from alcoholic drink during a long passage, and the sudden return to beer and spirits when they arrive in port. The landsman who is in the habit of taking his wine or beer at regular intervals is able to drink freely without showing it; while Poor Jack is madly inebriated with a relatively small quantity. He then becomes the stupid prey of the hawks and decoy-birds which hover round him while on shore. He resembles the flying-fish, which escapes the dangers of its natural element, only to fall easily into others.

At sea, the accommodation is simply abominable. Let us take, by way of example, one of the finest Australian clippers sailing from the port of London. See her at her loading berth, a triumph of the ship-builder's art. Surely a large ship with no expense spared in her fittings,

has well-appointed quarters for her sailors. She has cow-houses and sheep-pens on most approved principles; but the misery of the sailor's resting-place is indescribable. It is under a small deck, right forward, called the topgallant forecastle, comparable only to a dungeon. The huge chain cable leads through this space which is to be the home of the crew. The bunks are three tiers high, so that the lower bunk is but six inches from the floor. The windlass is also inside, and when, on heaving up anchor, the chain comes in covered with slimy fetid mud, which falls off in great flakes on the floor, the whole place is covered with the pestiferous ooze of Father Thames. His dripping oil-clothes form many rivulets, as he is compelled to hang them up by the side of his bed. The cow and the pig are furnished with the necessary comfort; the higher animal, man, is not deemed worthy of such attention. The death of a cow appears in the profit-and-loss account; the diseases contracted by bad housing of seamen do not appear. It is a true saying that 'Cleanliness is next to godliness.' How, then, can we expect our men to be moral, when they are herded together with less decency than the brute beasts on board? The cooks, to whom the preparation of very indifferent food is intrusted, have little or no training, as any one is deemed fit for this post in a merchant-ship. Three days a week, when the temperature is perhaps ninety degrees in the shade, the scalding hot pea-soup makes its appearance with unfailing regularity. The so-called pudding—a simple compound of flour and water unassisted by either fruit or suet—might be deemed the production of some fallen race; housewives would not recognise it. No condiments of any kind are served out. The tea is boiled in a greasy caldron. All things are unsightly.

We would wish especially to point out that the foregoing remarks do not apply to our large lines of Atlantic steamers, which are becoming every day more after the man-of-war pattern.

Plimsoll did good work for our sailors; much more remains to be done. We hear of commissions on the Housing of the Poor; they might well have extended their inquiries to Poor Jack. His case is a strong one, and only requires the light of public opinion to be thrown on it.

## A HOUSE DIVIDED AGAINST ITSELF.

BY MRS OLIPHANT.

### CHAPTER XLIV.

It had seemed to Frances, as it appears naturally to all who have little experience, that a man who was so ill as Captain Gaunt must get better or get worse without any of the lingering suspense which accompanies a less violent complaint; but, naturally, Lady Markham was wiser, and entertained no such delusions. When it had gone on for a week, it already seemed to Frances as if he had been ill for a year, as if there never had been any subject of interest in the world but the lingering course of the malady, which waxed from less to more, from days of quiet to hours of active delirium. The business-

like nurses, always so cool and calm, with their professional reports, gave the foolish girl a chill to her heart, thinking, as she did, of the anxiety that would have filled, not the house alone in which he lay, but all the little community, had he been ill at home. Perhaps it was better for him that he was not ill at home, that the changes in his state were watched by clear eyes, not made dim by tears or oversharpened by anxiety, but which took him very calmly, as a case interesting, no doubt, but only in a scientific sense.

After a few days, Lady Markham herself wrote to his mother a very kind letter, full of detail, describing everything which she had done, and how she had taken Captain Gaunt entirely into her own hands. 'I thought it better not to lose any time,' she said; 'and you may assure yourself that everything has been done for him that could have been done, had you yourself been here. I have acted exactly as I should have done for my own son in the circumstances;' and she proceeded to explain the treatment, in a manner which was far too full of knowledge for poor Mrs Gaunt's understanding, who could scarcely read the letter for tears. The best nurses, the best doctor, the most anxious care, Lady Markham's own personal supervision, so that nothing should be neglected. The two old parents held their little counsel over this letter with full hearts. It had been Mrs Gaunt's first intention to start at once, to get to her boy as fast as express trains could carry her; but then they began to look at each other, to falter forth broken words about expense. Two nurses, the best doctor in London—and then the mother's rapid journey, the old general left alone. How was she to do it, so anxious, so unaccustomed as she was? They decided, with many doubts and terrors, with great self-denial, and many a sick flutter of questionings as to which was best, to remain. Lady Markham had promised them news every day of their boy, and a telegram at once if there was 'any change'—those awful words, that slay the very soul. Even the poor mother decided that in these circumstances it would be 'self-indulgence' to go; and from henceforward, the old people lived upon the post-hours, lived in awful anticipation of a telegram announcing a 'change.' Frances was their daily correspondent. She had gone to look at him, she always said, though the nurses would not permit her to stay. He was no worse. But till another week, there could be no change; then she would write that the critical day had passed—that there was still no change, and would not be again for a week; but that he was no worse. No worse—this was the poor fare upon which General Gaunt and his wife lived in their little Swiss *pension*, where it was so cheap. They gave up even their additional candle, and economised that poor little bit of expenditure; they gave up their wine; they made none of the little excursions which had been their delight. Even with all these economies, how were they to provide the expenses which were running on—the dear London lodgings, the nurses, the boundless outgoings, which it was understood they would not grudge. Grudge! No; not all the money in the world, if it could save their George. But where—where

were they to get this money? Whence was it to come?

This Frances knew, but no one else. And she, too, knew that the lodgings and the nurses and the doctors were so far from being all. The poor girl spent the days much as they did, in agonised questions and considerations. If she could but get her money, her own money, whatever it was. Later, for her own use, what would it matter? She could work, she could take care of children, it did not matter what she did; but to save him, to save them. She had learned so much, however, about life and the world in which she lived, as to know that were her object known, it would be treated as the supremest folly. Wild ideas of Jews, of finding somebody who would lend her what she wanted, as young men do in novels, rose in her mind, and were dismissed, and returned again. But she was not a young man; she was only a girl, and knew not what to do, nor where to go. Not even the very alphabet of such knowledge was hers. While this was going on, she was taken, all abstracted as she was, into Society—to the solemn heavinesses of dinner-parties; to dances even, in which her gravity and self-absorption were construed to mean very different things. Lady Markham had never said a word to any one of the idea which had sprung into her own mind full grown at sight of Sir Thomas holding in fatherly kindness her little girl's hands. She had never said a word, oh, not a word. How such a wild and extraordinary rumour had got about, she could not imagine. But the ways of Society and its modes of information are inscrutable—a glance, a smile, are enough. And what so natural as this to bring a veil of gravity over even a *débutante* in her first season. Lucky little girl, some people said; poor little thing, some others. No wonder she was so serious; and her mother, that successful general—her mother, that triumphant match-maker, radiant, in spite, people said, of the very uncomfortable state of affairs about Markham, and the fact that, in the absence of her executor, Nelly Winterbourn knew nothing as yet as to how she was 'left.'

Thus the weeks went past in great suspense for all. Markham had recovered, it need scarcely be said, from his fit of remorse; and he, perhaps, was the one to whom the uncertainties were a relief rather than an oppression. Mrs Winterbourn had retired into the country, to wait the arrival of the all-important functionary who had possession of her husband's will, and to pass decorously the first profundity of her mourning. Naturally, Society knew everything about Nelly: how, under the infliction of Sarah Winterbourn's society, she was quite as well as could be expected; how she was behaving herself beautifully in her retirement, seeing nobody, doing just what it was right to do. Nelly had always managed to retain the approval of Society, whatever she did. In the best circles, it was now a subject of indignant remark that Sarah Winterbourn should take it upon herself to keep watch like a dragon over the widow. For Nelly's prevision was right, and the widow was what the men now called her, though women are not addicted to that form of nomenclature. But Sarah Winterbourn was universally condemned.



Now that the poor girl had completed her time of bondage, and conducted herself so perfectly, why could not that dragon leave her alone? Markham made no remark upon the subject; but his mother, who understood him so well, believed he was glad that Sarah Winterbourn should be there, making all visits unseemly. Lady Markham thought he was glad of the pause altogether, of the impossibility of doing anything; and that he was allowed to go on without any disturbance in his usual way. She had herself made one visit to Nelly, and reported, when she came home, that notwithstanding the presence of Sarah, Nelly's natural brightness was beginning to appear, and that soon she would be as *espiègle* as ever. That was Lady Markham's view of the subject; and there was no doubt that she spoke with perfect knowledge.

It was very surprising, accordingly, to the ladies, when, some days after this, Lady Markham's butler came up-stairs to say that Mrs Winterbourn was at the door, and had sent to inquire whether his mistress was at home and alone before coming up-stairs. 'Of course I am at home,' said Lady Markham; 'I am always at home to Mrs Winterbourn. But to no one else, remember, while she is here.' When the man went away with his message, Lady Markham had a moment of hesitation. 'You may stay,' she said to Frances, 'as you were present before and saw her in her trouble. But I wonder what has brought her to town? She did not intend to come to town till the end of the season. She must have something to tell me.—O Nelly, how are you, dear?' she cried, going forward and taking the young widow in her arms. Nelly was in crape from top to toe. As she had always done what was right, what people expected from her, she continued to do so till the end. A little rim of white was under the edge of her close black bonnet with its long veil. Her cuffs were white and hem-stitched in the old-fashioned *deep* way. Nothing, in short, could be more *deep* than Nelly's costume altogether. She was a very pattern for widows; and it was very becoming, as that dress seldom fails to be. It would have been natural to expect in Nelly's countenance some consciousness of this, as well as perhaps a something at the corners of her mouth which should show that, as Lady Markham said, she would soon be as *espiègle* as ever. But there was nothing of this in her face. She seemed to have stiffened with her crape. She suffered Lady Markham's embrace rather than returned it. She did not take any notice of Frances. She walked across the room, sweeping with her long dress, with her long veil like an ensign of woe, and sat down with her back to the light. But for a minute or more she said nothing, and listened to Lady Markham's questions without even a movement in reply.

'What is the matter, my dear? Is it something you have to tell me, or have you only got tired of the country?' Lady Markham said, with a look of alarm beginning to appear in her face.

'I am tired of the country,' said Mrs Winterbourn; 'but I am also tired of everything else, so that does not matter much.—Lady Markham, I have come to tell you a great piece of news,

My trustee and Mr Winterbourn's executor, who has been at the other end of the world, has come home.'

'Yes, Nelly?' Lady Markham's look of alarm grew more and more marked. 'You make me very anxious,' she cried. 'I am sure something has happened that you did not foresee.'

'Oh, nothing has happened—that I ought not to have foreseen. I always wondered why Sarah Winterbourn stuck to me so. The will has been opened and read, and I know how it all is now. I rushed to tell you, as you have been so kind.'

'Dear Nelly!' Lady Markham said, not knowing, in the growing perturbation of her mind, what else to say.

'Mr Winterbourn has been very liberal to me. He has left me everything he can leave, away from his heir-at-law. Nothing that is entailed, of course; but there is not very much under the entail. They tell me I will be one of the richest women—a wealthy widow.'

'My dear Nelly, I am so very glad; but I am not surprised. Mr Winterbourn had a great sense of justice. He could not do less for you than that.'

'But Lady Markham, you have not heard all! It was not like Nelly Winterbourn to speak in such measured tones. There was not the faintest sign of the *espiègle* in her tone. Frances, roused by the astonished, alarmed look in her mother's face, drew a little nearer almost involuntarily, notwithstanding her abstraction in anxieties of her own.

'Nelly, do you mind Frances being here?'

'Oh, I wish her to be here! It will do her good. If she is going to do—the same as I did, she ought to know.' She made a pause again; Lady Markham meanwhile growing pale with fright and panic, though she did not know what there could be to fear.

'There are some people who had begun to think that I was not so well "left" as was expected,' she said; 'but they were mistaken. I am very well "left." I am to have the house in Grosvenor Square, and the Knoll, and all the plate and carriages, and three parts or so of Mr Winterbourn's fortune—so long as I remain Mr Winterbourn's widow. He was, as you say, a just man.'

There was a pause. But for something in the air which tingled after Nelly's voice had ceased, the listeners would scarcely have been conscious that anything more than ordinary had been said. Lady Markham said 'Nelly?' in a breathless interrogative tone—alarmed by that thrill in the air, rather than by the words, which were so simple in their sound.

'O yes; he had a great sense of justice. So long as I remain Mrs Winterbourn, I am to have all that. It was his, and I was his, and the property is to be kept together.—Don't you see, Lady Markham?—Sarah knew it, and I might have known, had I thought. He had a great respect for the name of Winterbourn—not much, perhaps, for anything else.' She paused a little; then added: 'That's all. I wished you to know.'

'O my dear,' cried Lady Markham, 'is it possible—is it possible? You—debarred from marrying, debarring from everything—at your age!'

'Oh, I can do anything I please,' cried Nelly.

'I can go to the bad if I please. He does not say so long as I behave myself—only so long as I remain the widow Winterbourn. I told you they would all call me so.—Well, they can do it! That's what I am to be all my life—the widow Winterbourn.'

'Nelly—O Nelly,' cried Lady Markham, throwing her arms round her visitor. 'Oh, my poor child! And how can I tell—how am I to tell—?'

'You can tell everybody, if you please,' said Mrs Winterbourn, freeing herself from the clasp- ing arms and rising up in her stiff crape. 'He had a great sense of justice. He doesn't say I'm to wear weeds all my life. I think I mean to come back to Grosvenor Square on Monday, and perhaps give a ball or two, and some dinners, to celebrate—for I have come into my fortune, don't you see?' she said with an unmoved face.

'Hush, dear—hush! You must not talk like that,' Lady Markham said, holding her arm.

'Why not? Justice is justice, whether for him or me. I was such a fool as to be wretched when he was dying, because— But it appears that there was no love lost—no love and no faith lost. He did not believe in me, any more than I believed in him. I outwitted him when he was living, and he outwits me when he is dead.—Do you hear, Frances?—that is how things go. If you do as I did, as I hear you are going to do— Oh, do it if you please; I will never interfere. But make up your mind to it—he will have his revenge on you—or justice; it is all the same thing.—Good-bye, Lady Markham. I hope you will countenance me at my first ball—for now I have come into my fortune, I mean to enjoy myself. Don't you think these things are rather becoming? I mean to wear them out. They will make a sensation at my parties,' she said, and for the first time laughed aloud.

'This is just the first wounded feeling,' said Lady Markham. 'O Nelly, you must not fly in the face of Society. You have always been so good.—No, no; let us think it over. Perhaps we can find a way out of it. There is bound to be a flaw somewhere.'

'Good-bye,' said Nelly. 'I have not fixed on the day for my first At Home; but the invitations will be out directly. Good-bye, Frances. You must come—and Sir Thomas. It will be a fine lesson for Sir Thomas.' She walked across the room to the door, and there stood for a moment, looking back. She looked taller, almost grand in still fury and despair with her immov- able face. But as she stood there, a faint softening came to the marble. 'Tell Geoff— gently,' she said, and went away. They could hear the soft sweep of her black robes retiring down the stair, and then the door opening, the clang of the carriage.

Lady Markham had dropped into a chair in her dismay, and sat with her hands clasped and her eyes wide open, listening to these sounds, as if they might throw some light on the situa- tion. The consequences which might follow from Nelly's freedom had been heavy on her heart; and it was possible that by-and-by the strange news might bring the usual comfort; but in the meantime, consternation overwhelmed her.

'As long as she remains his widow!' she said to herself in a tone of horror, as the tension of her nerves yielded and the carriage drove away. 'And how am I to tell him—gently; how am I to tell him gently?' she cried. It was as if a great catastrophe had overwhelmed the house.

In an hour or so, however, Lady Markham recovered her energy, and began to think whether there might be any way out of it. 'I will tell you,' she cried suddenly; 'there is your uncle Cavendish, Frances. He is a great lawyer. If any man can find a flaw in the will, he will do it.' She rang the bell at once, and ordered the carriage. 'But, O dear,' she said, 'I forgot. Lady Meliora is coming about Trotter's Buildings, the place in Whitechapel. I cannot go. Whatever may happen, I cannot go to-day. But, my dear, you have never taken any part as yet; you need not stay for this meeting; and besides, you are a favourite in Portland Place; you are the best person to go. You can tell your uncle Cavendish— Stop; I will write a note,' Lady Markham cried. That was always the most satisfactory plan in every case. She sent her daughter to get ready for going out; and she herself dashed off in two minutes four sheets of the clearest statement, a *précis* of the whole case. Mr Cavendish, like most people, liked Lady Markham; he did not share his wife's prejudices; and Frances was a favourite. Surely, moved by these two influences combined, he would bestir himself and find a flaw in the will!

In less than half an hour from the time of Mrs Winterbourn's departure, Frances found herself alone in the brougham, going towards Portland Place. Her mind was not absorbed in Nelly Winterbourn. She was not old enough, or sufficiently used to the ways of Society, to appreciate the tragedy in this case. Nelly's horror at the moment of her husband's death she had understood; but Nelly's tragic solemnity now struck her as with a jarring note. Indeed, Frances had never learned to think of money as she ought. And yet, how anxious she was about money! How her thoughts returned as soon as she felt herself alone and free to pursue them, to the question which devoured her heart. It was a relief to her to be thus free, thus alone and silent, that she might think of it. If she could but have driven on and on for a hun- dred miles or so, to think of it, to find a solu- tion for her problem! But even a single mile was something; for before she had got through the long line of Piccadilly, a sudden inspiration came to her mind. The one person in the world whom she could ask for help was the person whom she was on her way to see—her aunt Cavendish, who was rich, with whom she was a favourite, who was on the other side, ready to sympathise with all that belonged to the life of Bordighera, in opposition to Eaton Square. Nelly Winterbourn and her troubles fled like shadows from Frances' mind. To be truly dis- interested, to be always mindful of other people's interests, it is well to have as few as possible of one's own.

Mrs Cavendish received her, as always, with a sort of combative tenderness, as if in com- petition for her favour with some powerful

adversary unseen. There was in her a constant readiness to outbid that adversary, to offer more than she did, of which Frances was usually uncomfortably conscious, but which to-day stimulated her like a cordial. 'I suppose you are being taken to all sorts of places?' she said. 'I wish I had not given up society so much; but when the season is over, and the fine people are all in the country, then you will see that we have not forgotten you.—Has Sir Thomas come with you, Frances? I supposed, perhaps, you had come to tell me'—

'Sir Thomas?' Frances said with much surprise; but she was too much occupied with concerns more interesting to ask what her aunt could mean. 'Oh, aunt Charlotte,' she said, 'I have come to speak to you of something I am very, very much interested about.' In all sincerity, she had forgotten the original scope of her mission, and only remembered her own anxiety. And then she told her story—how Captain Gaunt, the son of her old friend, the youngest, the one that was best beloved, had come to town—how he had made friends who were not—nice—who made him play and lose money—though he had no money.

'Of course, my dear, I know—Lord Markham and his set.'

At this Frances coloured high. 'It was not Markham. Markham has found out for me. It was some—fellows who had no mercy, he said.'

'O yes; they are all the same set. I am very sorry that an innocent girl like you should be in any way mixed up with such people. Whether Lord Markham plucks the pigeon himself, or gets some of his friends to do it'—

'Aunt Charlotte, now you take away my last hope; for Markham is my brother; and I will never, never ask any one to help me who speaks so of my brother—he is always so kind, so kind to me.'

'I don't see what opportunity he has ever had to be kind to you,' said Mrs Cavendish.

But Frances in her disappointment would not listen. She turned away her head, to get rid, so far as was possible, of the blinding tears—those tears which would come in spite of her, notwithstanding all the efforts she could make. 'I had a little hope in you,' Frances said; 'but now I have none, none. My mother sees him every day; if he lives, she will have saved his life. But I cannot ask her for what I want. I cannot ask her for more—she has done so much. And now, you make it impossible for me to ask you!'

If Frances had studied how to move her aunt best, she could not have hit upon a more effectual way. 'My dear child,' cried Mrs Cavendish, hurrying to her, drawing her into her arms, 'what is it, what is it that moves you so much? Of whom are you speaking? His life? Whose life is in danger? And what is it you want? If you think I, your father's only sister, will do less for you than Lady Markham does—! Tell me, my dear, tell me what is it you want?'

Then Frances continued her story. How young Gaunt was ill of a brain-fever, and raved about his losses, and the black and red, and of his

mother in mourning (with an additional ache in her heart, Frances suppressed all mention of Constance), and how *she* understood, though nobody else did, that the Gaunts were not rich, that even the illness itself would tax all their resources, and that the money, the debts to pay, would ruin them, and break their hearts. 'I don't say he has not been wrong, aunt Charlotte—oh, I suppose he has been very wrong!—but there he is lying: and oh, how pitiful it is to hear him! and the old general, who was so proud of him; and Mrs Gaunt, dear Mrs Gaunt, who always was so good to me!'

'Frances, my child—I am not a hard-hearted woman, though you seem to think so—I can understand all that. I am very, very sorry for the poor mother; and for the young man even, who has been led astray; but I don't see what you can do.'

'What!' cried Frances, her eyes flashing through her tears—'for their son, who is the same as a brother—for them, whom I have always known, who have helped to bring me up?—Oh, you don't know how people live where there are only a few of them, where there is no society, if you say that. If he had been ill there, at home, we should all have nursed him, every one. We should have thought of nothing else. We would have cooked for him, or gone errands, or done anything. Perhaps, those women are better; I don't know. But to tell me that you don't know what I could do. Oh,' cried the girl, springing to her feet, throwing up her hands, 'if I had the money, if I had only the money, I know what I would do!'

Mrs Cavendish was a woman who did not spend money, who had everything she wanted, who thought little of what wealth could procure; but she was the Quixote in her heart which so many women are where great things are in question, though not in small. 'Money?' with a faint quaver of alarm in her voice. 'My dear, if it was anything that was feasible, anything that was right, and you wanted it very much—the money might be found,' she said. The position, however, was too strange to be mastered in a moment, and difficulties rose as she spoke.—'A young man. People might suppose— And then Sir Thomas—what would Sir Thomas think?'

'That is why I came to you; for he will not give me my own money—if I have any money. Aunt Charlotte, if you will give it me now, I will pay you back as soon as I am of age. Oh, I don't want to take it from you—I want— If everything could be paid before he is better, before he knows—if we could hide it, so that the general and his mother should never find out. That would be worst of all, if they were to find out—it would break their hearts. Oh, aunt Charlotte, she thinks there is no one like him. She loves him so; more than—more than any one here—and to find out all that would break her heart.'

Mrs Cavendish rose too, and stood up with her face turned towards the door. 'I can't tell what is the matter with me,' she said; 'I can scarcely hear what you are saying. I wonder if I am going to be ill, or what it is. I thought just then I heard a voice. Surely there is some one at the door. I am sure I heard a

voice— Oh, a voice you ought to know, if it was true. Frances—I will think of all that after—just now— He must be dead, or else he is here !'

Frances, who thought of no possibility of death save to one, caught her aunt's arm with a cry. The great house was very still—soft carpets everywhere—the distant sound of a closing door scarcely penetrating from below. Yet there was something, that faint human stir which is more subtle than sound. They stood and waited, the elder woman penetrated by sudden excitement and alarm, she could not tell why; the girl indifferent, yet ready for any wonder in the susceptibility of her anxious state. As they stood, not knowing what they expected, the door opened slowly, and there suddenly stood in the opening, like two people in a dream—Constance, smiling, drawing after her a taller figure. Frances, with a start of amazement, threw from her her aunt's arm, which she held, and calling 'Father!' threw herself into Waring's arms.

### THE GORSE.

IN spring, many a waste common and heath is bright with the showy, golden flowers of the gorse. If we pluck and examine one of these flowers, we shall find that in all essential points it is similar to that of the pea. The gorse, in fact, belongs to the great natural order of plants which includes the peas, the vetches, the clovers, and a host of other well-known flowers. Now, this pea tribe is interesting to the scientific botanist because of the many modifications which have occurred in past time among the different species belonging to it. Perhaps the most common of these modifications is the conversion of leaves into tendrils, by aid of which, plants like the peas and the vetches climb some distance from the ground, and so gain light and air which would have been excluded in a lower position.

The gorse affords us an excellent instance of modification in another direction. Any one who examines the gorse carefully cannot fail to be struck with its entire want of leaves; it is simply one mass of thorns and spines. The question at once suggests itself, has the plant always been possessed of these organs, or was there a time when it was clothed with leaves, like ordinary plants? We shall be better able to answer that question by considering for a few moments one or two other plants of a prickly character. Let us take the bramble and the hawthorn. It is quite apparent at first sight that there is a difference between the prickles of the bramble and those of the hawthorn, and this difference is proved by further examination. If the thorn of a bramble be pressed laterally with the thumb, the branch being meanwhile held firmly in the hand, it breaks away from the stem quite easily, leaving a smooth scar behind; but if the prickle of a hawthorn be treated in the same manner, it snaps abruptly, leaving a jagged rupture, and showing that it was connected with the internal

wood of the stem. The truth is that the thorn of the bramble is a modified hair, while that of the hawthorn is an arrested or aborted branch. Here, then, is a difference in origin between organs serving the same purpose—namely, protecting from browsing animals the tender green shoots and leaves.

But the gorse has gone a step further, for not only have the branches been modified into thorns, but the leaves themselves have been modified into spines. If a few of the seeds of the gorse be planted in a spot where they can be observed, it will be found that the plant, instead of coming up ready-armed with spines, as might be expected, comes up with the characteristic three-lobed leaf of the clovers; and continued observation will show in an interesting manner the gradual conversion of these leaves into spines. Now, what does this mean? Its coming up with ordinary leaves points to a period in its history when it was wholly clothed with these leaves. The plant was, however, exposed to so many dangers, that, to insure its existence, part of the branches and leaves were modified into prickles, to protect it against browsing animals; and in process of time, the struggle became so fierce, that all the foliage leaves had to be converted into these defensive organs. This change was necessarily very gradual, and worked out only in the course of ages. The metamorphosis is, however, so complete, that the original leaves are now produced only at a very early stage in the life of the individual plant—a stage which corresponds to a remote period in the history of the race.

The gorse, however, could not make this change without making many others. Leaves are not useless appendages; on the contrary, they perform important functions. If we strip the thin skin from the lower surface of an ivy leaf, and put it under a microscope, we shall find it crowded with countless little mouth-like openings, technically known as 'stomata.' These mouths open and shut according to the state of the weather, and it is by means of them that communication is maintained between the internal parts of the leaf and the air. Many persons think that plants derive all their sustenance from the ground, the fact being that they get a very large portion of it from the air. Air contains carbonic acid gas. When air is admitted by these stomata into the interstices of the cells in the interior of leaves, their green colouring matter has the power, under the action of sunlight, of breaking up the carbonic acid gas into its constituent elements of carbon and oxygen; the carbon being fixed or retained in the body of the plant, and the oxygen being freely returned into the air. In this way the plant gets a great part of its food. Now, stomata are nearly always confined to leaves, and they are generally found on the under surface of these appendages. The reason of this is that, being on the under surface, they escape the fierce heat of the sun, and so act freely and regularly. In some plants, however, such as the leek, whose leaves grow



perpendicularly, and whose surfaces are therefore equally exposed, the stomata are spread indifferently over each side. In water-plants, again, whose leaves float on the surface of the water, the stomata are confined almost entirely to the upper surface—a remarkable exception to the general rule. But the gorse has no leaves. What, then, has become of its stomata? If a moderately young plant be examined, a very unusual feature will be noticed. In most plants as large as the gorse, the green colouring is confined to the leaves; but in the gorse, we find that the whole plant—spines, thorns, and stem—is green. The conversion of foliage leaves into defensive organs has necessitated this change. A spine does not give such a large spread of surface as a leaf; and if the stomata of the gorse were confined wholly to the spines, the plant would soon lose that hard, woody, resisting character which makes its defences so formidable. Consequently, spine, thorn, and stem are green, and one and all are crowded with the little mouth-like organs found only on the leaves of ordinary plants. The loss of surface involved by the change of leaves into spines is thus compensated, and the plant getting in this way sufficient food-material, is able, by its strong, hardy character, to take a good position in the struggle for existence. Doubtless, these two changes of which we have been speaking went on side by side, the range of the stomata gradually extending as the leaves were more and more perfectly modified into spines.

A habit very valuable to the plant seems to have been acquired and perfected simultaneously with the development of spines, and that is the power of forcibly ejecting its seeds. In hot summer weather, it is no unusual thing to hear, in the neighbourhood of a gorse-clad common, the sharp crackling noise of the pods as they open and shoot the seeds on all sides. By this method of seed-dissemination, gorse plants gradually extend themselves, and so grow in vast compact masses, often covering large areas. This mode of growth is of great advantage to the plants. It adds to the effectiveness of their defensive organs; and by its density, and consequent shade, prevents any but a few favoured plants from growing in the same soil. In the flowering season, too, it increases the general attractiveness, the combined brilliancy of countless blossoms being much more likely, by their splendour, to allure fertilising insects, than the display of a single plant.

These few points on which we have touched do not by any means exhaust the noticeable features of the gorse, but they serve to show how interesting a plant it is. We have seen that it has not always been what it is now. By tracing the development of the individual plant, we get a glimpse of the gorse in bygone times, and see—faintly it may be, but no less surely—the many changes through which it has passed. How successful these modifications have been, how beneficial they are to the plant, every common and heath testifies. Wherever the gorse is seen, it is green and flourishing. Being destitute of leaves, it holds forth no attraction either to browsing mammals or nibbling rodents; and should either of these be tempted to attack its tender green stems, it keeps both alike at

bay with its array of formidable spines. The gorse, in short, is one of many plants which have derived inestimable advantages from judicious modification.

## AT TREVENNA COTTAGE.

BY T. W. SPEIGHT.

A STORY IN EIGHT CHAPTERS.—CHAP. I.

It is generally conceded that there are few prettier places on the south-west coast of England than Boscombe Regis, and that is no scant praise. It is little more than a scattered hamlet, with a few old-fashioned houses of the better kind and a score or so of detached villas, built on the slope of a hill and fronting the sea. As yet, to the annual shoal of Cockney excursionists, Boscombe Regis is a *terra incognita*, for which happy immunity it is doubtless indebted to the fact of its being a dozen miles from the nearest railway station. Still, those who live there all the year round are by no means so buried alive and shut out from the great world—especially during the summer and autumn months—as some people might imagine. If the boarding-houses, like the visitors, are not very numerous, it can be safely averred that they are select and somewhat exclusive; and many families who find Boscombe Regis agree both with their constitutions and their pockets, have a happy knack of coming year after year, in which case it need scarcely be said that the oftener they find their way there the more welcome they are made. But not even during the depth of winter is Boscombe entirely cut off from the world and left to stagnate alone. Its air is so balmy, its temperature so equable, and it is so sheltered and shut in from cold winds, that many people of delicate health find it suits them between October and March better than any other locality, and consequently make it their headquarters during the period in question.

One of the prettiest, if one of the smallest, of the Boscombe villas is entitled Trevenna Cottage. It is a white two-storied house, festooned with creepers of various kinds, and standing in its own grounds, half-way up the slope of the hill. From the terrace in front of it there is a splendid view of the bay and of the high yellow headlands which shut it in like two protecting arms.

When old Mrs Beverington, who had lived at the Cottage for twenty years, died, her nephew, who inherited her property, and who was a busy London man, at once advertised it as being to let furnished. Not long did it remain empty. One sunny afternoon, within a couple of months of the old lady's death, a fly from Mumpston Junction brought two gentlemen and a lady, who at once proceeded to take possession of Trevenna Cottage. Several boxes of luggage were brought by the local carrier later on.

The new occupants of the Cottage proved to be a certain Captain Avory, his wife, and a relative of theirs—a gentleman in an advanced stage of pulmonary disease. In the course of

the forenoon following his arrival, Captain Avory inquired his way to the house of Dr Mayfield, the elder of the two medical practitioners of which Boscombe Regis could boast, and handed his card to the servant who answered his ring. At this time, Dr Mayfield was close on sixty years of age. He was a good-hearted, simple-minded practitioner of the old school, clinging to the methods of treatment which were in vogue when he first started in life. Having some private means of his own, he could afford to take life in the easy-going fashion which best suited him, and more than once he had been known to turn over a lucrative patient to his brother-practitioner, who was burdened with an expensive wife and a numerous family.

When Dr Mayfield entered the room into which Captain Avory had been ushered, that gentleman at once introduced himself as the new occupant of Trevenna Cottage.

'If you will call when next you are that way, I shall feel obliged,' he said. 'It is a cousin of mine whom I am desirous that you should see. A sad case, poor fellow! Consumption in an aggravated form, so I have been given to understand. Since he returned from Australia, the climate of which did not suit him, he has been living in the north of England. His lungs were always delicate; and last winter, having had the misfortune to be snowed up for about twenty hours in the drift of a Scotch railway, we have now before us the deplorable result. The medical man who has been attending him since the beginning of his illness has ordered him here as—I am afraid to think—a last resource.'

'If his lungs are naturally delicate,' said the doctor, 'I should have thought that the Australian climate would be far more likely to suit him than that of England.'

Captain Avory shook his head. 'Edward is not of a communicative disposition. I can give you no particulars. I only judge that the climate did not agree with him, from a few casual remarks which he has let drop from time to time.'

Dr Mayfield promised to call at Trevenna Cottage in the course of the afternoon, and with that the captain went his way.

It can scarcely be said that the doctor was very favourably impressed by Captain Avory; and yet, when he came to think over their interview, he was at a loss to specify even to himself what was the particular trait or feature about his visitor which rendered him objectionable; but that he was objectionable to him he could not deny. The captain was a slightly built, florid-complexioned man of forty-five or fifty years of age, partially bald, such hair as he had left at the sides of his head being carefully brushed forward so as to droop in a limp wisp in front of each of his rather large red ears. He had a boldly curved aquiline nose, and a sandy moustache, through the rift of which his long sharp teeth gleamed whenever he smiled, which he had a knack of doing very often. It was when he smiled that the doctor liked him least. He affected a certain jaunty juvenility of manner which had not the air of being quite natural. It might have suited him when he was a quarter of a century younger, but at

fifty years of age it seemed somewhat out of place.

Dr Mayfield called at Trevenna Cottage in the course of the day, where he was received by the captain, who introduced him in the first place to Mrs Avory, and secondly to his cousin, the doctor's patient that was to be, Mr Edward Saverne. Mrs Avory, a small-featured, rather fragile-looking woman, although considerably younger than her husband, must yet have seen her thirtieth birthday. She was quiet in all her movements, and had one of those low, almost caressing voices which sound so soothingly in the ears of the sick. She had long white eyelashes, which gave her a somewhat peculiar appearance; and the moment she began to talk to any one, her eyes began to blink and kept on blinking as long as she continued talking. She had thin firm-set lips, which rarely unbent into a smile; and despite the fragility of her appearance, and her low pleasant tones, she gave one the impression of being a woman of indomitable will—a will before which that of her husband would be as a reed shaken by the wind. There can be little doubt, in fact, that Mrs Avory was the virtual head of the household at Trevenna Cottage.

In our thoughts we generally associate that dire disease, consumption, with the young—with those who are still in the spring-time of life; but when Dr Mayfield entered Mr Saverne's room, he perceived that his patient was a man of forty, or even a year or two more than that. A dark-haired, dark-bearded, sallow-faced man he was, with hollow cheeks, and deep-set eyes, in which smouldered a sort of sullen fire. He was coughing as the doctor entered the room, and his cough told half the tale. Mayfield sat down beside him, and when he was sufficiently recovered, proceeded to put a few brief questions to him, which he answered readily enough, but with an air of indifference, as though both questions and answers were already familiar to him.

'I think, for my own satisfaction, and providing you have no objection, that I should like to sound your chest to-morrow,' the doctor said.

'I had much rather you did nothing of the kind,' he answered, with a sort of weary petulance. 'My chest has been sounded twice already. Why go through the process a third time? You know better than I can tell you that I am a doomed man. Pray, let me linger out my few remaining days as quietly as may be. I shan't be here long to trouble any one.'

The doctor's heart echoed his words: doomed he was indeed.

Captain Avory joined his visitor at the garden gate and walked with him down the lane. 'I am afraid you find my cousin in a very poor way, doctor?' he said.

'I should certainly have preferred to find him better in health than he is.'

'Ah, I fear poor dear Edward is not long for this world,' he remarked with a sigh.

'We are none of us long for this world, if it comes to that,' replied the doctor tartly. There was something in the captain's manner rather than in his words which irritated him, and yet he could not have told why.

Captain Avory changed the subject abruptly,

and after a little talk on indifferent topics, the two men parted at the corner of the lane.

After this, Dr Mayfield called at Trevenna Cottage almost daily, and for a time it seemed as if the soft balmy air of Boscombe, ozonised by the breath of the great Atlantic, was effecting a radical improvement in his patient's condition; and yet he knew but too well that such improvement could be but temporary. For the first month or so the sick man's appetite grew better, his eyes looked brighter, and his cheeks a trifle less hollow. 'I never feel chilled here, as I used to do so often at Sto—, at the place I was last at in the north,' he said more than once. Dr Mayfield remarked to himself, as a somewhat curious fact, that neither he nor the captain nor Mrs Avory ever by any chance mentioned the name of the place from which they had come; it was always alluded to vaguely as 'the north.'

Every fine day for some weeks Mr Saverne was wheeled out in a Bath-chair with Captain Avory in attendance. He liked to be drawn up and down the stretch of firm yellow sands at the head of the bay. But after a time there came a longish spell of bad weather; and when the fine weather returned, Mr Saverne was surprised, although the doctor was not, to find how much more quickly his outdoor exercise, gentle though it was, tired him, than it had done previously. A little while longer, and the Bath-chair had to be discarded; and all that the sick man could do was to have his couch wheeled out on the terrace and there recline in the sun for a little while during the warmest part of the day. The end was drawing perceptibly nearer.

One forenoon, while Mr Saverne was still strong enough to get out in the Bath-chair, Dr Mayfield encountered him as he was being drawn along by Timothy Bunce; but this time, for a wonder, he was not accompanied by Captain Avory, but by a person of the opposite sex. Bunce stopped instinctively as the doctor drew near, and he in his turn came to a stand. After a few words had passed between them, Mr Saverne said with a nod of his head: 'This is my—I mean, a relative of mine, Mrs Preedy, who has made a long journey on purpose to see me.—Maria, this gentleman is Dr Mayfield, who is doing his best to patch me up for a little while.'

Mrs Preedy and the doctor bowed; and then the latter went on to make a few remarks about Boscombe, and how beneficial its climate often proved to people in delicate health. Mrs Preedy listened and smiled faintly, but, like her relative, she was apparently a person of few words. She was a woman whose age might be judged to be nearer forty than thirty. In person she was tall, gaunt, and angular. She had a prominent nose and high cheek-bones, and she was what is generally termed 'hard-featured.' She looked like a woman who had been schooled by much trouble, and whom nothing now could greatly move. She was dressed entirely in black, but her garments were not those of a person in affluent circumstances.

After a little desultory talk, chiefly on the doctor's side, the latter raised his hat, and the little procession moved slowly on its way. Next day, when he called at the Cottage, Dr Mayfield

saw nothing of Mrs Preedy, nor did any one there mention her name.

No sick man could have been more assiduously waited upon than was Mr Saverne. Mrs Avory was indefatigable in her attentions; she was continually hovering around him, and for ever trying to anticipate his slightest wish. In fact, the doctor somehow got the idea into his head that there were times when Mr Saverne would fain have dispensed with such continuous attentions, that he would like to have been left more to himself, and that now and then Mrs Avory's persistent kindness worried him into an irritability which was anything but beneficial to him. Be that as it may, Mrs Avory's demeanour never varied, nor apparently was any expense spared to gratify the whims or fancies of the sick man.

After a time, it seemed to Dr Mayfield that Mrs Avory was considerably overtaxing her strength—this was after Mr Saverne had become much worse; and he hinted as much to her, and suggested the advisability of obtaining the services of a trained nurse, so as to relieve herself in some measure. But she only shook her head, and set those firm lips of hers still more firmly. 'I could not reconcile it to my conscience,' she said, 'to allow dear Edward to be waited upon by a hired nurse, while I have health and strength to attend to him myself. No, Dr Mayfield; you must just allow me to go on in my own way. It will be time enough to claim assistance when I break down.'

It was quite evident from the first that Mr Saverne was a man of reserved and uncommunicative disposition. Yet occasionally, when not pressed for time, Dr Mayfield would sit down by him for a little while and attempt to draw him into conversation by starting some topic which he thought would be likely to interest him. But nothing seemed to interest him except very faintly, and before long the genial, chatty old man would have to give up the effort as hopeless. Just about that time, the doctor had a nephew who was on the point of going out to settle in Australia, and it seemed to him that Mr Saverne, after his long residence in that country, might be able to furnish him with some information which would be of service to his young relative. But when the subject was broached, he saw that he had unwittingly touched a sore point. A faint flush came into the sick man's cheeks. 'If you don't mind, doctor, I would rather not talk about Australia,' he said; 'my experiences in that country were not of a pleasant kind, and I don't care to have them revived in my memory.'

Dr Mayfield hastened to apologise.

But if Mr Saverne was reticent and uncommunicative in his intercourse with his medical attendant, he was equally so, as far as could be judged, in his relations with the captain and Mrs Avory. When it was necessary for him to speak to them or to answer some question of theirs, what he had to say was couched in the fewest possible words. He seemed to accept all their attentions and all their efforts to render him comfortable as if they were no more than his due, and entirely as a matter of course. For Captain Avory he appeared to have conceived an especial dislike. More than once the doctor

noticed his eyes follow the retreating form of that gentleman with a strange sullen gleam in them, as though he were nursing some deep-rooted feeling of animosity against him.

Simple-minded and unsuspecting as Dr Mayfield was by nature, he yet had a feeling that within the four walls of Trevenna Cottage lay hidden a mystery of some kind, the key to which he knew not where to look for.

By-and-by it came to pass that the sick man could no longer get out of doors, although he could still sit up for a couple of hours daily, propped up with pillows in an easy-chair. The end was drawing near with rapid strides, and he knew it; but no one ever heard him give utterance to the slightest murmur or complaint of any kind. Mrs Avory was now compelled to call in some one to assist her. The person she selected was not a trained nurse, but a middle-aged woman from a neighbouring village, who had had the charge of an invalid gentleman for several years, and was consequently at home in a sickroom.

It was no surprise to Dr Mayfield when, on making his usual call one morning, he found that Mrs Preedy had arrived since his last visit. She was sitting by Mr Saverne's side as he went in, holding one of the invalid's hands in both of hers; but she at once rose, bowed, and left the room. He found her waiting for him in the garden at the termination of his visit.

'He is worse—much worse than I expected to find him,' she said abruptly as the doctor drew near.

'Everything is being done for him that can be done. He lacks for nothing.'

'O yes, I know all that. I am not complaining,' she replied with something like a sob in her voice. Then after a moment or two she said: 'I have a little favour to ask of you, Dr Mayfield.'

'Anything that I can do for you, Mrs Preedy, I shall be happy to do.'

'It is only to beg of you to let me know—to send me a telegram—before the end comes, so that I may be in time to see him once again in this world.'

'But surely the captain or Mrs Avory'—

'No, no; it is no use trusting to them,' she interrupted. 'They would not send for me; they would rather I did not see him again.—Here is my address,' she added as she slipped a scrap of paper into his hand. 'You will send me a telegram, will you not, so that I may be in time?'

'I will; I promise.'

'Oh, thank you—thank you!' she cried; and with that her hard face softened and her eyes became suffused with tears. 'He is my brother, and he has always been very dear to me,' she added simply. 'But that is a secret which I ought not to have told you; only, I know that with you it will be quite safe.'

What new phase of mystery was here! The doctor went his way thoroughly puzzled.

Mr Saverne became weaker day by day. On calling one morning and stepping quietly into his room, Dr Mayfield found him asleep. Mrs Dempster, the nurse, was sitting by his side. While the doctor was gazing at his wan and wasted features, the dying man began to move

uneasily and to mutter in his sleep. 'Florrie, my darling Florrie, why don't you come to me?' he said. Then after a pause: 'They keep you from me—they won't let you come near me—wretches that they are!'

'Does he often talk in his sleep?' inquired the doctor of the nurse.

Before the woman could answer, Mrs Avory answered for her. She had entered the room in her usual noiseless fashion. 'It is only during the last few days that he has begun to ramble in his sleep,' she replied, blinking rapidly with her eyes.

'Who is the "Florrie," if I may ask, to whom he was alluding just now?'

'That is more than any of us know. We never heard him mention her name till the other evening, when he was asleep. Captain Avory's opinion is that the person dear Edward alludes to must be some one he knew in Australia. Certainly, we are not acquainted with any one of that name in England.'

On making his customary call about a week later, Dr Mayfield saw that the end was now very near. After leaving the bedroom, he sought the captain and Mrs Avory, who were just finishing breakfast. 'If there is any one—any relatives or friends,' he said, 'who would like to see Mr Saverne before it is too late, I think it would be advisable to summon them without delay.'

They looked at each other for a moment, and then the captain said: 'Thank you, doctor, for telling us; but I don't think it will be needful to summon any one—in fact, I may tell you that there is no one to summon. We are dear Edward's only near relatives; and as for friends—I opine that he left most of them behind in Australia.'

'Mrs Preedy?' the doctor ventured to suggest.

The captain frowned. 'Mrs Preedy is only a very distant relation,' he answered; 'and as she was here so short a time ago, I see no necessity for her to come again. Besides, she is very poor, and can ill afford so long a journey. I shall of course inform her when all is over.'

The doctor bowed, bade the pair good-morning, and went.

Mrs Preedy only a distant relative! Why, she herself had told him that she was Mr Saverne's sister, and, somehow, he felt that he would take her word in preference to that of the captain. He had given her his promise that he would summon her when it became necessary to do so, and the time was now come. He walked at once to the post-office and despatched the following telegram: 'If you wish to see Mr S. alive, you must come without delay.' Mrs Preedy's address was No. 5 Town Row, Stonelands, Derbyshire.

It may be mentioned here that although there was no access by railway to Boscombe Regis, a telegraphic wire had been laid down some years previously between that place and Mumpton Junction, a dozen miles away.

When Dr Mayfield called at the Cottage next forenoon, he found Mrs Preedy already there. Evidently she must have travelled all night. She thanked him with a look. Neither the captain nor Mrs Avory appeared to have the



slightest suspicion that her arrival at that particular time was the result of anything more than a coincidence.

A few hours later, Mr Saverne passed quietly away.

### IRISH STEP-DANCING.

DANCING is a favourite pastime amongst the Irish peasants, and there is no lack of dancing-masters, who make their living by teaching the 'steps.' Indeed, even people of position learn 'step-dancing,' such as jigs, reels, and hornpipes. Very pretty steps they are, and far more difficult to learn and dance correctly and well than the ordinary valse or polka, which, after all, have but one step, the chief thing being to dance that one step gracefully and smoothly. In a jig, there are as many as twenty different steps, and each single step has what is termed 'its double,' a somewhat similar step, but more complicated than the single. To dance even five steps of the jig with their double requires, independently of the perfection only attained by practice, constant repetition and great exertion. To dance twenty steps and their double—in all about forty—straight through, would be almost impossible; besides, it would occupy too much time. Yet a different jig, apparently, could be danced by one person several times during the same evening, by doing, say, five steps each time. But you must begin a jig by dancing the 'rising' steps—this rule never changing. The steps in a reel are not unlike those in the jig, but are much less tiring.

Some months ago, a very good dancing-master came to our village in Ireland; and some friends of ours got private lessons in the 'steps' from him during the day, the evenings of course being devoted to the working-class. 'Marvin' was a young man, not more than eight-and-twenty, I should think, and he had been for many years teaching the steps. The son of a respectable farmer, and having a wonderful taste for music and dancing, he could not settle to farmwork or any trade, and much against his parents' wishes, determined on being a teacher of dancing. Accordingly, he was 'bound' to a dancing-master; and when he had learned enough to enable him to teach, did so. He went from village to village, staying from one to three months in each, just as he found he had pupils and it paid. The court-house or national school was generally given to him, for one seldom can get a large room in villages; and besides, beyond a trifle to the keeper, there is little expense attending. Marvin varied his fees according to those he taught and also according to the size of the village; a smaller sum being accepted from the labourer than the shopkeeper or farmer—a shilling and one-and-sixpence being accepted weekly from the former for each one; while two-and-sixpence, and even three shillings, were paid by the latter.

Marvin told me that, on an average, he derived an income of two hundred pounds a year by teaching the 'steps.' Belonging to the better class of Irish dancing-masters, Marvin had a fiddler, a blind man, who accompanied him on his rounds; but he did not pay him—'benefits' being organised to do this; two and three pounds, sometimes even more, according to the number

present, being collected at such a time. Notice of a 'benefit' for the fiddler is generally given some nights before.

We learned six steps of the jig, and their double: a 'slip' jig, a four-hand reel, and three steps of the Highland fling. For my part, I had almost too many to practise. These and others, such as the 'Moneen Jig,' 'Irish Jig,' 'High Call Cap,' 'the Garden of Daisies,' 'the Blackbird,' 'the Priest and his Boots,' 'St Patrick's Day,' come under the title of 'steps'; our vales and polkas, &c., being termed 'circular dances'; while the quadrilles are called 'sets.' These are now much indulged in by shop-people and the better class of farmers, being considered by them more like what the 'ladies and gentlemen' do. Knowing their 'steps' is looked upon by the peasantry as a necessary part of their education, quite as much as to read or write—and I have often heard them express contempt for a girl or 'boy' who, to use their own words, 'has no dance'—therefore, parents who can ill afford it, will do without necessities even to have their children taught their steps when a dancing-master comes their way.

Marvin was most amusing in some of his expressions, particularly when he tried to use a French word. For instance, in connection with the reel, the word *chassez* was frequently used by him; and until one got accustomed to his pronunciation of it—*shass-her!* it was perhaps a trifle puzzling. On one occasion, I remember he asked how we polished our floor for dancing. I said with French chalk and spermaceti. He seemed puzzled; but asked for pen and paper to write the mixture down, in case he should forget it. I gave both to him; but again he seemed perplexed, and once more asked the names, and how to spell them, which I did, going twice over 'spermaceti.' At last he asked me to write, remarking that he was not able to write, only to speak the French language!

There are many kinds of dancing 'benefits.' Marvin had two during the ten weeks he spent in our village—both for the fiddler. The dancing-school is of course held in the evening, when the day's work is over—half-past six to nine or ten o'clock being the usual hours. On benefit nights they dance till much later. On such a night, when all the company have assembled, the fiddler or dancing-master, whichever one the benefit is for, goes round with a plate or, more generally, his hat; and each person present willingly gives a trifle. Sometimes, if the collection is good and the person so 'benefited' is, as the people express it, a 'dacent man,' he will go out and buy porter and cakes (biscuits) as refreshments for the 'ladies.' The men don't require such attention, or perhaps, to speak more to the point, don't get it. There is a story told of a dancing-master in our village, who, when about concluding his lessons for the evening, was interrupted by the entrance of a young farmer, whose hob-nailed brogues made a woul clatter. Advancing towards the dancing-master, he said he came to learn his steps. 'Tis late in the day ye are, I'm thinkin', replied the master. 'Me classes are about bein' closed, an' I am now teachin' me pupils grease [we presume he meant grace] in their movements.'

I have known several cases where poor people wanting to thatch their cabin, perhaps, or to buy

a pig without any means to do so, will organise a benefit, and thus obtain the necessary money. For this purpose, a written notice will be carried round to the neighbours. Sometimes they may just be told 'Pat Murphy' wants money to set the praties, and he will hold a benefit on Friday (or, more generally, Sunday) night. Perhaps fifty neighbours will come. Of course, so many could not possibly come into a small cabin at once; but they always take it in turn to 'fut the floor'—for in step-dancing, only a certain number can dance at a time. These people will dance away all night, subscribe their mite, and never eat or drink anything, because, naturally, such poor people could not provide food for so many. It is not unusual for the neighbours each to bring some victuals with them, such as bread, tea, and sugar; and these will be divided and distributed as far as they will go.

Another kind of benefit for the same purpose is got up by raffling—a goat, a turkey, or a concertina, perhaps a donkey, being the most general things to raffle. The winner will sometimes provide refreshments, often getting up a second raffle to do so. The music for step-dancing is pretty, and is, when played on the piano, very tiring to the fingers to keep up for any length of time, till you get accustomed to it. In the 'High Call Cap,' the men beat time in one part to the music with their feet, while in another part they do so by clapping their hands; and the general effect is very pretty.

To dance the steps really well, one must be nimble and active. I remember seeing a number of the peasants, who, to try and perfect themselves in their 'dance,' danced on the road near some trees, and constantly held on to some of the low branches, to enable them to jump high and use their feet to advantage. There is a story told of a certain mayor who did not know how to dance; and as there was to be the customary ball on St Patrick's night at the vice-regal court, at which he was, as is usual, to dance with Her Excellency, he hired a private room, and when his shop was closed at night, went there, where a dancing-master met him to teach him his steps, unknown, as he hoped, to any one. Unfortunately, it leaked out, and some people annoyed the poor mayor sorely by standing outside the window and saying: 'Right foot, left foot, hay foot, straw foot. Faix, thin, an' Paddy 'tis you as can soon fut the floor.' The origin of hay foot, straw foot, was, that when, as is sometimes the case, the right foot or hand was not known from the left, a dancing-master often tied a wisp of hay on one foot and of straw on the other, and thus forcibly impressed the difference.

Many dancing-masters can teach the steps and play the fiddle at the same time; such belong to the poorer class, and make their living as much by playing at wedding-feasts or 'live wakes' as by teaching the steps. The meaning of a 'live wake' may not be so generally known as is the usual term of 'wake.' The actual meaning is the same—that is, both kinds of wake are held with the same idea, a 'keeping of the last night together.' A 'wake' is of course the last night together, or compliment, so to speak, that can be shown a dead friend before he is laid to rest. A 'live wake' is held the night before people emigrate,

and is the scene of much mirth and dancing, so that the last night spent in the old country may be remembered by those who seldom if ever return. The friends coming to these live wakes generally bring food with them, because the cabin is bare in every sense previous to the departure of its occupants. The fiddler sends his hat round and makes his collection. At a wedding-feast, a musician and dancing-master combined will get three and four pounds, and there may be two or three fiddlers.

I remember, when driving, seeing one on the road whom I knew. Poor old 'Shauneen' (Johnny) had his hat off, and with his pocket-handkerchief wiped his streaming face. I stopped to speak and ask the old man whither he was bent. 'To the weddin', sir, yer honour, of Bill Flaherty's daughter; an' the road is long an' the bagpipes heavy; an' 'tis late I'll be, I'm afeared.' So I bade him sit beside the coachman, and he should get a 'lift.' Some days afterwards, he called to express his gratitude, playing the 'Fox-hunter's Galop' while he spoke, and telling me he earned three pounds by being in time to perform and put the dancers right in their 'sets.'

In concluding these remarks, I must add that for my part I think dancing-masters ought to be encouraged in our circle, because there really is something to learn, in fact real hard work in the 'steps'; and very few of us, who, though able to glide gracefully *à la trois temps* to the strains of Liddell's band, could 'foot the floor' in such perfect time, to the music of perhaps a penny whistle, as do the Irish peasants in the many difficult steps of an Irish jig.

#### LIFE-LINKS OF HISTORY.

THE ages of history are often linked together in a very remarkable way by the lives of individual men. A striking instance of this will appear in the facts we are about to relate. There was a man living a few years since in a village in Lancashire whose life wanted but one link to connect it with the period of the Commonwealth. That link was supplied by his father, who was born in 1657, one year before the death of the great Protector, Cromwell, and lived through the reigns of Charles II., James II., William and Mary, Anne, George I., and to the twenty-fifth year of the reign of George II. He married in his early days a young woman who had been nurse in the ancient family of the Chethams of Turton Tower, near Bolton. She died, and for some years William Horrocks, for such was the name of the subject of our narrative, remained a widower; but in 1741, when eighty-four years old, he married his housekeeper, a buxom damsel of twenty-six. As may be supposed, his marriage excited considerable attention, and among those who took great interest in it were the Chetham family, with whom his former wife had been a great favourite, and who greatly respected the now aged bridegroom. He and his bride were summoned to the Hall, where they were shown much kindness; their portraits were painted; and they were dismissed to their home laden with wedding presents. The portraits of the couple were placed in the gallery of the Hall, where they remained till they came into the

possession of a lady near Manchester, a relative of the Chetham family, with other portraits of its members. What changes had occurred during that man's life, living as he did till 1752, when he died at the advanced age of ninety-five! He had witnessed the decadence of the Stuart dynasty; the reign of William and Mary had come to a close; Anne had for a few years revived the rule of the Stuart race; the House of Brunswick had been called to the vacant throne, and far into the reign of the second sovereign of that family had the old man's life been prolonged.

The fruit of his second marriage was a son, James Horrocks, who was born in 1744, in the seventeenth year of the reign of George II., and who lived to see the events that transpired during the latter part of that reign, and those which followed far on into the reign of our present illustrious Queen, as he was living till 1843, and was then a hale old man, one hundred years of age. Shortly after that time, he passed away, and now lies gathered to his fathers in the village graveyard of the parish where he spent his days. Thus these two lives connect the times in which we live with that of the great Protector, extending as they do over a period of one hundred and eighty-six years. It may be interesting to our readers to state, as showing the physical contour and healthful vigour of this man, that he was, even when he had attained his hundredth year, of noble stature and appearance; his venerable countenance expressed a benevolent mind, and his silvery locks were truly a crown of honour. He stood nearly six feet high when he raised himself to an erect posture, and was by no means deficient in mental capacity. His conversation was, for his age, lively, and not wanting in humour. On one occasion, not long before his decease, he said to his daughter, a staid old woman: 'I wonder what I shall dream next. I dreamed last night I was going to be married again, and who knows but I could find some lady that would have me yet.'

His son-in-law, with whom he lived, was an old gray-headed man, and not near so quick in intellect as his more aged father-in-law, who often had, as he said, to 'insense him,' when it was desired to communicate or explain to him any circumstance that had transpired. His physical powers were shown in a remarkable exploit in the year 1833. It was winter, and an election of a member of parliament was to take place for South Lancashire at Newton, fifteen miles from Bolton. Walking to the latter place, three miles from his home, he travelled by rail to the former; but, missing the train when he wanted to return, he walked the distance to Bolton, and thence to his abode, a journey of eighteen miles—no little achievement for a man ninety years of age.

Reference has been made to the portraits of his father and mother which were painted at the instance of the Chethams. These came into the possession of the old man in a singular way. There was a sale of the property at the Hall which the family had inhabited, and he repaired to it for the purpose of purchasing them, but found they had been removed, and were, with the portraits of that family, in the possession of the lady above mentioned. He therefore went to her and expressed his desire to have them.

The lady was so much taken with the man, and touched by his wish to become their possessor, that she, though parting with them reluctantly, presented them to the old man, and they were taken home by him with a gladdened and grateful heart. He retained them as precious heir-looms to the day of his death.

There may be other instances in which the lives of two individuals have extended over an equal space with this father and son; but we have not met with any which, considering all the circumstances surrounding them, have been so truly remarkable; forming life-links of the past with the present; covering the whole period from the Cromwellian to the Victorian age, from the Commonwealth to the time in which we ourselves live.

#### A DANGEROUS POINT ON THE EAST COAST OF AFRICA.

It has long since come to be recognised as an imperative necessity that wherever, along the coast or out in the ocean, the presence of an exposed or semi-exposed reef or shoal represents a danger to passing ships, the perilous point should be indicated by a lighthouse, a lightship, or a buoy; and this in face of the circumstance that these safeguards can often only be provided at enormous cost. Now, we think it will be news to many people to learn that there is a point on the great maritime high-road on which the Suez Canal occurs, where navigation is attended with great dangers—where, in fact, a number of lives, and much valuable shipping and cargo, are annually lost—but where the lighthouses which would afford safety are not to be found. Passing through the Suez Canal and the Red Sea, one enters the Gulf of Aden, the opening of which is at Cape Guardafui, where the coast of Africa turns sharply to the south, and the Indian Ocean is fairly entered. About eighty miles below Cape Guardafui occurs Ras Hafun, a prominent headland, connected with the mainland by a narrow strip of sand. Vessels coming from the East steer a course to 'make' the coast between the two headlands. But there is no light on either; the lead-line, owing to the great depth of the water even against the very cliffs, is of little guidance; and navigation, as a consequence, often becomes a matter of mere guesswork. One will naturally inquire: Why are there no lights on these two headlands to guide the navigator? The answer is brief, but eminently to the point. Because both Cape Guardafui and Ras Hafun are in the hands of an uncivilised people. The latter belongs to the Mijjertheyn tribe; and the former is under the sovereignty of the Sultan of the northern Somali. A traveller has spoken of these latter people as being 'extremely violent and quarrelsome in their disposition, notorious for cheating and lying,' and as pursuing for the most part a wandering, pastoral life. Where is the wonder that such a race should not only themselves abstain from putting up guiding lights to passing vessels, but should be ill disposed to allow a stranger to do the work for them? As a matter of fact, it will probably be an outside nation which will ultimately carry out the enterprise; and circumstances point unmistakably to England, it is thought, as being that nation.

As things at present exist, the hardy but savage inhabitants of this portion of Africa derive absolute profit from the wrecks which occur off the coast, as the remnants of cargo, timber, and rigging washed up upon the beach represent valuable perquisites. There can be no doubt that a very determined effort must be made on the part of England—as the nation which has the greatest stake in the water highway which leads to India—to come to such terms with the natives as will admit of the erection and maintenance of beacons on the two dangerous headlands, and indeed on any neighbouring points that may require to be made easily distinguishable to the mariner. This view of the question is taken by Sir Travers Twiss in a paper ‘On International Conventions for the Maintenance of Sea-lights,’ which he recently read at the twelfth annual conference of the Association for the Reform and Codification of the Law of Nations, held at Hamburg. He gave it as his opinion that it is within the range of practical probability that both the Mijjertheyn and the Somali tribes may be found to be amenable to motives of self-interest, if they are approached with due caution. ‘The first step,’ he justly says, ‘should be to wean them from the habit of regarding the goods of the shipwrecked mariner as providential spoil of the sea; the second step may then be attempted—namely, to induce them to welcome a light-tower, by offering to them a subsidy which shall more than compensate their chiefs for the annual loss of revenue which may ensue to them upon the cessation of wrecks upon their coast.’ After stating that England ‘may reasonably be expected to take the lead in negotiating treaties with the natives of the coast,’ Sir Travers declares that she cannot, however, be expected, if she should succeed with her negotiations, ‘to undertake the task of erecting and maintaining the necessary lights without the co-operation of other nations, who have a like, although not an equal interest with her in the safety of the navigation of the Gulf of Aden.’

It appears that in accordance with what may be called the common law of Europe, Great Britain would not be entitled to levy dues on passing vessels on account of lights not within her own territory; but Sir Travers Twiss thinks that an international convention might give her such a right. In conclusion, we may indorse a suggestion that Sir Travers has thrown out. ‘Until,’ he says, ‘a common understanding can be arrived at upon a subject of such general interest to humanity, it may be possible to keep a steam light-vessel stationed off Cape Guardafui, notwithstanding the violence of the monsoon; and the light of that vessel would serve as a rounding light for vessels coming from the southward.’ This is a really good idea, and we trust, if it proves practical, that it will be carried out.

#### SALMON SOLD FOR ONE CENT EACH.

Recent advices from New Westminster, in British Columbia, describe the big run of salmon which occurs every fourth year in the Fraser River. ‘The “canneries” which are running,’ says a Canadian newspaper, ‘are said to be taxed to their utmost capacity to pack the vast

quantities of fish which are being caught, as they were coming by hundreds of thousands. No such large and extensive run of salmon has been known before. The total average pack promised to be twenty thousand cases to each cannery engaged; making the total probable pack of the Fraser River canneries for this season from one hundred and twenty to one hundred and thirty thousand cases. On the 1st of August, Ewen’s cannery did the biggest day’s packing ever done on the Fraser River, canning a total of fourteen hundred cases in one day. The canneries have been paying their fishermen from three to five cents a fish; but owing to the plentiful supply, salmon have been offered and sold for one cent each, the proprietors being willing to accept such a small price rather than throw the fish over-board.’

#### A MIDSUMMER NIGHT’S DREAM.

WE had heard the night-birds calling in the thickets far away,  
While the shades of eve were falling, while the twilight gathered gray,  
And the scented gales of gloaming wafted secrets from the sea,  
And the first pale star was gleaming in a golden mystery.

Then a holy calm enwrapt us, and a blissful silence fell;  
Far away the doves were ‘plaining, droned the beetle in the dell.  
Ah! the words that are not uttered, like the songs that are not sung,  
Are more musical in cadence than are known to mortal tongue.

Had we eaten of the lotus, or was this a land of spells,  
This an isle of ancient fable where a great Enchanter dwells?  
Naught is fair but that we dream of; and we dreamt a little while,  
As the wanderer in the desert dreameth of the distant Nile.

All that bygone time we dreamt of, when the earth was fresh and young,  
And great Pan beside the river piped the rustling reeds among.  
There were naiads in the streamlets, there were dryads in the trees,  
And the apples still hung golden in the fair Hesperides.

We are wiser; we have banished from their haunts the gods of old;  
All that wondering faith has vanished with the outlived Age of Gold;  
Yet, when moonlight winds are blowing, lovers’ voices, blending low,  
Murmur still the same old story Paris whispered long ago.

Yonder moon is growing paler; soon within the reddening sky,  
Shall the star of morning vanish as the Sun-god draweth nigh,  
And the visions that are born in the sweet silence of the night,  
Like mist armies on the hillsides, from his darts shall take their flight. J. W.

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